

**Remarks of the Honorable Steve Driehaus
170th Miami University Commencement
Oxford, Ohio
Saturday, May 9, 2009**

As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you all very much. President Hodge, distinguished faculty and administration, candidates for graduation: it's always great to be back in Oxford.

And it's great to be here with my colleague Paul Ryan from Wisconsin. It's not very often he and I get to share a podium.

And I'd like especially to thank the editorial board of the Miami *Student* for making me feel so welcome. Last month the *Student* weighed in about the selection of Paul and me as speakers today, writing quote: "The editorial board recognizes and does not wish to downplay the accomplishments of these honorable men, but does not think they are of the caliber of prominence most were expecting from the Bicentennial Commencement speaker."

I love the press.

And it's good to know after all these years that the Miami *Student* remains an independent and thoughtful voice, unafraid to challenge the administration or offend powerful elected officials.

But it's an honor to be with you today, Congressman, and it's an honor to share this occasion with other Miami alumni who have followed the path of public service. And celebrating Miami's rich history of service to our nation is a fitting theme to commemorate the bicentennial of the school's founding.

We all know how important service is to our nation.

We know that the men and women who serve our country in uniform make sacrifices every day to protect our rights and freedoms.

We know that those who make commitments to the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps carry out work that brings the leadership and ideals of our nation to the far reaches of the globe, and that helps to lift up the people and places in our country that have been left behind.

We know that at a time when our nation faces challenges, a renewed national commitment to service can help us to meet those challenges. I supported and the President recently signed a law that will double the size of AmeriCorps, and will create new opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve their country.

And we know that Miami University has been instilling Americans with the values of service to our nation for two hundred years.

I encourage each and every one of you to make service a part of your lives.

In addition to service, I want to talk about a topic probably much more on your minds as you prepare to enter the next chapter of your lives: Success.

It's customary for a commencement speaker to wish success for the graduates. But I think we

should ask: How do we define success?

How do you define it for yourself?

I think we often take too narrow a view of what success actually means. I think we often embrace the notion that success is a thing that can be quantified, that can be measured.

Before the ceremony started, I was paging through the program booklet. I was reading through the names of the noteworthy alumni who went onto great lives of service for our nation.

It's an impressive list: admirals and ambassadors; statesmen and jurists. They found success through their commitment to service.

Some found it defending this nation in war, some from serving it in peace.

Others found it through shaping our laws and representing our citizens.

It's an impressive list, and I'm humbled to be among this school's long roster of graduates who have pursued lives of public service.

But we must not forget those whose names never make such a list.

Consider Megan Quinn (class of 2004), who left Miami and became the outreach director for a non-profit that works to combat climate change. She offers the advice to "follow your heart and your passion. It might be looked down upon or frightening... to do work that might not bring immediate material rewards, but in the long run it will be more satisfying to work for a cause that you believe in."

Consider Stanlee Stahl (class of 1967), who has dedicated her life to running a foundation that supports “the Righteous”—European Gentiles who risked their lives during World War II to aid and rescue Jews during the Holocaust. Her work brings resources to these aging heroes around the world, and promotes education about the Holocaust here in the United States.

Consider the thousands of Miami alumni, who walked thousands of different paths, using their skills and talents to enrich others’ lives. The thousands of people who left here, and continued to pursue knowledge and a diversity of experience. The thousands of people who found that success for them meant discovering something—a world, a community, a family—where their lives were made fuller and more complete by giving of themselves.

That helps explain why today we celebrate 200 years of service. Miami has earned plenty of praise after 200 years—excellence in academics—achievement in athletics—a first-class faculty—and a campus whose beauty is unmatched.

But today we celebrate service, and we celebrate the generations of Miami alumni who left here to further expand their horizons and found some form of service as an element of their success.

So I ask again, how do you define success for yourself?

Today is a milestone for all of you. Today marks the culmination of four years of hard work and dedication. Or maybe five years or six years of hard work, dedication, and a few extracurricular activities. The diploma you will soon receive represents that achievement, as well as the skills and tools you have acquired along the way.

It is the key that will open a multitude of doors in your future endeavors.

It’s up to you to decide which doors to open. And I urge you to view today not as the last step in the journey of your education, but as the first step on a journey toward a fuller understanding of yourself and the world around you. Though your years of learning in the classroom may be at

an end, you now command the means to supplement what you have learned with experiences and opportunities that may defy whatever notion of success you now possess.

Do not be afraid to cross that street. Do not be afraid to walk down a new path that perhaps you never envisioned in your lifetime, but that years of learning, and thinking, and preparing have equipped you to handle.

I reflect with great satisfaction on the course my life has taken because I chose to step beyond the threshold of what was safe and familiar. When I was a junior in college, I spent the year at Miami's campus in Luxembourg. That experience opened my eyes to a much larger world, and sparked an interest in international development and global affairs that eventually led to my service in the United States Peace Corps.

That year in Luxembourg also brought me together with a variety of people from a variety of places, one of whom I ended up marrying—my wife Lucienne.

Do not be afraid to open yourselves up to new experiences.

Because when you take that risk, when you open that door, you may find that even among unfamiliar people, there is common humanity. You may find that when you open yourself up to different ideas and diverse ways of thinking, there are new insights to be gained.

You may find that in a community where you have never belonged, you suddenly have a clear and vital role to play.

So, rather than wishing for you to find great success, I'm instead *challenging* you to find great success. Choose

to open the doors that will broaden your perspectives, that will allow you continue to learn and grow. Choose to open the doors that will enrich your lives while at the same time enriching the lives of others.

How do you define success for yourself? I hope you will take the time to know what success truly means for you. Though your time here is ending, now is when you can start to leave your mark on Miami's incredible legacy—because this school's greatness is realized not in classrooms or laboratories, but by the lives its graduates lead when they leave this campus.

I challenge you to become a part of that greatness.

Good luck, and God bless.